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(1) PNP's Shimoji calls for Futenma solution in February, DM
Kitazawa says Futenma issue should be resolved as soon as possible

NIKKEI Evening (Page 2) (Full)
January 12, 2010

People's New Party (PNP) policy chief Mikio Shimoji met with Defense
Minister Toshimi Kitazawa on the morning of Jan. 12. Discussing the
issue of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station, he told Kitazawa:

"The three ruling coalition parties will submit their proposals on the relocation site by the end of January. The government should decide on a policy in February and proceed with negotiations with the U.S." Kitazawa responded: "This issue should be resolved as soon as possible." The two officials agreed that the relocation issue should be settled after the enactment of the FY2010 budget.

(2) Editorial: Japan-U.S. foreign ministerial talks: Break away from reliance on "foreign pressure"

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 5) (Full)
January 12, 2010

A Japan-U.S. foreign ministerial meeting will be held in Hawaii tomorrow. Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada will brief Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station and the two ministers will confirm their intent to continue close consultations.

Foreign Minister Okada has said, "There will be nothing new," so he is likely to convey once again the three ruling parties' plan to decide on a relocation site by May. This foreign ministerial meeting will be a perfunctory one aimed at keeping up the appearances of the Japan-U.S. relationship, which has been strained since the change of administration. It is probably also meant to indicate that discussions will continue.

Secretary Clinton is scheduled to visit Asian and Pacific countries until Jan. 19. She will be announcing the U.S.'s Asia and Pacific policy during her stopover in Hawaii. This foreign ministerial

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meeting that has been included in her itinerary is also a ceremony to mark the start of talks on the deepening of the Japan-U.S. alliance on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the revision of the bilateral security treaty.

(Japan and the U.S.) should not turn away from the issues that need to be rectified, such as the base issues in Okinawa, and should aim for future-oriented talks that will make the alliance the cornerstone of peace and stability in Asia and the Pacific.

However, the U.S. government continues to claim that the current plan to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko in Nago City is the "best" option. When facing a difficult issue, Japanese diplomacy has the habit of taking advantage of "foreign pressure." We would like to watch closely to see whether this tactic is used in Hawaii.

It can also be expected that if the U.S. Secretary of State indicates that it would be difficult to revise the current relocation plan, the media will report this without comment, thus manipulating public opinion into thinking "it won't work, after all." Here, it is essential to look into "why" (revising the relocation plan will not work).

Mr. Joseph Nye, who was assistant secretary of defense under the Clinton administration, contributed an article to The New York Times on Jan. 7 in which he wrote that, "If (Japan and the U.S.) become too obsessed with one issue, they may lose sight of the all-important bilateral alliance." Mr. Nye was involved with the negotiations on Futenma's return in 1996.

He gave the advice that a high-handed approach, such as U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' attitude during his visit to Japan last October of dismissing the search for a relocation site other than Henoko as "counterproductive," will only force the new administration into a corner and will not produce any positive results.

Mr. Nye's analysis was that even if the U.S. government pushes for the current relocation plan stubbornly and Japan uses foreign pressure to suppress public opinion, the result will only be a "Pyrrhic victory" (a victory in which the gains are far less than the cost).

The article opened with: "Seen from Tokyo, America's relationship

with Japan faces a crisis." This seems to mean that Japan is making a great fuss about nothing.

The demand of the previous Inamine administration in Okinawa for a 15-year limit to the use of the Futenma replacement facility was also suppressed by using "foreign pressure." At the summit meeting in 2001, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori mentioned Okinawa's demand as if it was hearsay, and President George Bush's response was: "Setting a time limit is inappropriate." The President's rejection made it possible for the Japanese government to provide a satisfactory explanation to the domestic audience.

Such a passive approach went unchallenged under the previous administration.

Unless the basic principle of civilian control, that the armed forces should obey the political authorities, is not reaffirmed, there will be no way to resolve the base issues. The deepening of

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the alliance will also be only in form and not in substance.

(3) Nago mayoral election report (Part 1): Anti-base group is forgetting economic assistance

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)

January 11, 2010

Masashi Miyamoto

About 13 years have passed since Nago City emerged as a relocation site for U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture). The Nago mayoral election on Jan. 24 will be the city's fourth poll to ask residents whether to accept the government plan to relocate the Futenma base to the city. Candidates favoring the government plan won the past three elections, but the outcome of the upcoming election will likely have a great impact on the Hatoyama administration's review of the existing relocation plan. The feelings of Nago residents, who will be forced to make a decision, are complicated.

Nago City, located in the northern part of Okinawa Prefecture, has a population of about 60,000. Since 1996, when the Henoko district in the city emerged as the relocation site for the Futenma heliport facility, residents have been split into two groups: one in favor of the plan, the other against it.

The government injected a total of 60 billion yen in economic measures to promote the north of Okinawa for eight years from 2000 through 2008 in return for Nago City's acceptance of the relocation plan. As a result, Henoko and other place succeeded in attracting Okinawa National College of Technology and a call center. A seven-story industry support center building was erected in the center of the city. The emotional strains among Nago residents had been gradually reduced because the city succeeded in inviting industries to an information and financial special regulatory zone, providing about 950 jobs.

However, the city's residents were divided again because the Hatoyama administration advocated a review of the existing Futenma relocation plan. Many residents are fed up with the Futenma issue. They have gotten weary of mayoral elections focusing on the base issue.

Nago residents have an "allergy to U.S. bases." Yet, they have made preparations psychologically and physically to accept the Futenma relocation plan. It could be said that their concern that their efforts might come to naught in the upcoming election exceed their allergy to U.S. bases.

"We cannot help accepting the base because Henoko has been picked (as the relocation site for Futenma). There is no problem because the acceptance of the relocation plan will better promote the region," said a 65-year old restaurant owner, expressing anxiety about an election to put the plan to relocate Futenma to Henoko to the test again.

"If incumbent Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro, who favors the existing plan, is reelected, the Hatoyama government won't be able to say anything. In case Susumu Inamine, the former head of the board of education, wins the election, those who have opposed the plan to relocate Futenma to Henoko will be left out, because economic

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assistance will be discontinued," the restaurant owner said.

90 PERCENT of residents accept existing relocation plan

Nago residents have strong hopes that if the city accepts the relocation plan, jobs and consumption will increase. If the base is built in Henoko, located about 8 kilometers from Nago proper, noise from it will not affect the city. However, the city's main shopping street is noticeably quiet. According to a private research firm, more than 20 construction firms have gone bankrupt in the city since 2006. As a result, the city has no choice but to accept the plan.

A 58-year-old self-employed worker stressed: "Some forget that we have received economic assistance from the government in return for our acceptance of its plan to relocate Futenma to Henoko. We are required to overcome the economic slump. Nothing can be resolved by only opposing U.S. bases." That Henoko resident appears to be taking the Futenma relocation seriously.

One city council member clearly said: "In the Henoko district, there are growing calls for the government to decide on the Futenma relocation as quickly as possible. It is only natural for Henoko residents to feel that way because the city accepted the plan after spending 13 years to consider it."

Yasuhide Miyagi, 54, chairman of a volunteer group for the promotion of a replacement facility in the Henoko district, composed of the commerce and industry association in the city and about 40 volunteers, said: "About 90 percent of the residents favor the acceptance of the plan conditioned on compensation and improvement of infrastructure. Okinawa, which has no basic industries, has no other choice but to rely on the base industry."

He continued: "Forces preventing the relocation plan are opposing it on ideological grounds alone. Although they have cited environmental protection, including dugongs, I haven't met anyone who said, 'I saw a dugong.' "

(4) Japan should not evade debate on immigration policy

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
January 9, 2010

Son Won Sok, part-time instructor at Chuo University

The Republic of Korea (ROK) has already replaced the in-service trainee system modeled on the Japanese system and introduced in the early 1990s.

Discussions were held because of violations of human rights and because illegal employment became a social problem. These discussions led in 2003 to the introduction of an employment permit system for officially accepting unskilled workers.

Furthermore, with the rapid increase in international marriages, especially among farmers and fishermen, since 2000 and the growing diversification of foreigners living in the ROK, the right of suffrage was granted to permanent foreign residents in 2005. In 2007, the "basic law on the treatment of foreign residents in the ROK," upholding the concepts of "social integration" and "coexistence," was enacted. This law stipulates the national and local governments' responsibility to strive for and foster the

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prevention of discrimination, respect for human rights, and so forth, and to educate the people about such issues.

Specifically, there is a program to provide 450 hours of free language and cultural lessons for foreigners, and people who have successfully completed this program are given preferential treatment when they apply for permanent residency or ROK citizenship.

This shift in immigration policy owes much to the 10 years of liberal administration under Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun and the questions raised and actions taken by citizens' groups, which grew in force through the democratization movement.

At present, the government has indicated a plan to adopt a dual citizenship policy for the purpose of attracting highly skilled professionals.

The foreign population in Japan is less than 2 percent, which is comparable to the ROK, but Japan emphasizes the notion of "controlling" foreigners. It has evaded a frank debate on whether foreign workers are needed and has resorted to taking in foreigners of Japanese descent or trainees through the back door. The same goes for the nurse trainees under EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements).

Japan also lags in social integration. If nothing is done about this situation, there will be an increase in children raised in a foreign culture who have little education and can't find work or can only find unstable jobs at the bottom of the social pyramid. This is certainly not what Japan desires.

Diversity is a good thing. Japan has a history of adopting foreign things in the process of its development since the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The political, labor, and industrial sectors should address this problem as their own rather than running away from it.

(5) Editorial: LDP should clearly express opposition to suffrage for foreigners

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 11, 2010

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa have indicated eagerness to submit to the upcoming Diet session a bill to give the right to vote in local elections to permanent foreign residents in Japan. Whether to grant the right to foreigners is a serious matter that could undermine the nation's sovereignty.

In his first press conference this year, Hatoyama said: "Once the government completes coordination with the ruling camp, it will submit a bill granting suffrage to foreigners to the Diet." Ozawa said in a speech in South Korea late last year: "The government should sponsor the bill as a clear expression of its stance on the matter. It will become a reality at the ordinary Diet session." On Jan. 9, a senior DPJ member also referred to the likelihood that the bill will be enacted in the upcoming Diet session.

Within the ruling camp, however, People's New Party President Shizuka Kamei, state minister for financial affairs and postal reform, said on a radio program: "I will not support the bill (during a cabinet meeting), so the government will not be able to

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submit it to the Diet." So the situation remains fluid. However, calls for suffrage for foreigners are growing among South Korean government officials and South Korean residents in Japan who belong to the Korean Residents Union in Japan (mindan), which supported the DPJ in the House of Representatives election last summer. So the fate of the bill is still open to conjecture.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the largest opposition party, appears to be slow to react. At the end of last year, the "true conservative policy study group," composed mainly of LDP conservative lawmakers, submitted a resolution opposing suffrage for foreign residents. More calls against it should be issued from within the LDP.

Meanwhile, Chiba, Ishikawa, Kumamoto and other prefectoral assemblies have in succession adopted position documents against granting suffrage for foreigners. There are many prefectoral assemblies that once supported the idea but have begun to express opposition to it. Such moves are considered to reflect a sense of alarm over the Hatoyama administration's attempt to ram through a suffrage bill.

It is fully conceivable that the granting of the right to vote in elections to foreigners violates Article 15 of the Constitution, which stipulates that "the people have the inalienable right to choose their public officials and to dismiss them." In a ruling in 1995, the Supreme Court judged that if legal steps were taken, granting the right to vote in elections to foreign residents was not unconstitutional. But since that opinion was part of the subtext of the ruling, it has no legal binding power. The principal text specified that foreign residents were not regarded as "citizens" under Article 93 of the Constitution.

Meanwhile, Hatoyama indicated that the governments of Japan and South Korea are eyeing a Japan-South Korea joint security declaration, saying: "This idea emerged amid growing momentum for cooperation between Japan and South Korea." It is important for Japan and South Korea to cooperate in the security area, but this is a separate matter from the issue of suffrage for South Koreans in Japan.

LDP President Sadakazu Tanigaki said in his inaugural speech in September of last year: "We should be cautious" about granting foreign residents the right to vote in elections. The LDP president should take the lead and clarify the party's opposition to suffrage for foreigners in order also to revitalize the LDP as a real conservative political party.

(6) Child abduction and international divorce (Part 1): Differing child custody systems - barriers created by not signing the Hague Convention; people who reclaim their children are regarded as kidnappers

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 27) (Full)
January 10, 2010

Naoko Sato

In the summer of 2006, a 14-year-old girl went to an airport in the southeastern state of North Carolina to see her mother off. Shortly before parting, the girl tried to run toward her mother, Miho Watanabe, 49, crying out, "I'm going back to Japan with you!" But

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the daughter was blocked by force by Watanabe's American ex-husband. Watanabe has not been able to see her daughter ever since.

Watanabe became acquainted with her future husband, an American service member, in Zama, Kanagawa Prefecture, and they tied the knot in 1989. The husband soon began inflicting violence on Watanabe. They moved to the United States to try to start over, but the husband continued to beat her, and he was eventually arrested on suspicion of assault. Watanabe and her daughter returned to Japan in 1995 after staying at a shelter temporarily.

She divorced her husband after returning to Japan. After a while, her ex-husband started begging to let him see his daughter. Giving in to his persistence, Watanabe put her daughter, who was a junior high school student at the time, on a plane to the United States alone with a return ticket in the summer of 2005.

Her ex-husband met his daughter at the airport, and that was the last Watanabe heard from him. He had moved and his whereabouts were unknown. Watanabe asked for a search to be conducted through the Foreign Ministry, but she could not find any leads.

About a year later, Watanabe received a surprise call from her daughter. She said, "I'm living with my dad right now." She was attending a local junior high school while living with her father. "Dad wouldn't let me call you."

Watanabe hurriedly flew to the United States to bring back her daughter. In the United States, the ex-husband said to Watanabe: "If you take my daughter back to Japan, you will become a kidnapper."

Having filed for divorce in Japan where one parent gets sole child custody, Watanabe thought she had custody of her child. But in the United States, where joint custody is granted to both parents after divorce, her ex-husband had designated himself as a parent with sole custody either during the divorce proceedings or at some other time.

The purpose of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is to prevent international parental child abduction after international marriages end in divorce. The United States is a signatory to the convention, but Japan is not. This situation does not allow the mutual recognition of divorce proceedings that are conducted in member countries.

If Watanabe returns to Japan with her daughter without the consent of her former husband, she will be put on the wanted persons list by U.S. authorities as a kidnapper. If that happens, she will not be able to travel back to the United States. "It was a mistake to let my daughter visit the United States." Watanabe had no other option but to return to Japan alone with a heavy heart.

A Spanish man came to Japan to visit his eight-year-old son whom his former Japanese wife had taken back to her home country. The man became a criminal after he came to Japan.

Last June, Jose Calcio (TN: phonetic), 51, a company employee residing in Madrid, visited his ex-wife's house in Saitama Prefecture. He was not able to see his son, so he wrote the following message on the wall of the house across the street with red spray paint: "Your papa has come to see you. Do not forget your papa."

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He was arrested by police on charges of property destruction, and released after paying a fine of 120,000 yen. At the police station, he was forced to sign a document pledging not to visit Japan again because his ex-wife had filed a request with the police not to allow him to go near her house.

He returned to Spain and visited Japan again last November. The only thing he could do was go near the house of his ex-wife. "I might get caught by just walking near her house," Calcio said with tears in his eyes. "I might not be able to see my son ever again."

Parental child abduction transcending national borders could occur immediately after an international marriage has failed. The United States and European countries, which are signatories to the Hague Convention, are vocally calling for Japan to accede to the convention. This series of articles studies the propriety of acceding to the convention through the suffering of parents who have been separated from their children.

ROOS